

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative: Authorize the Mayor to Execute a Revised Memorandum of Understanding for the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness (OCPEH)

Department: Housing and Community Services

What are the root causes of inequity in Carrboro and/or overall as it pertains to this subject area?

American political, social, and financial systems have worked to actively marginalize many different groups. This has often come in the form of denying rights or access to systems and institutions that greatly benefit one's livelihood, education, and health. For hundreds of years, intentional actions have been taken to deny humanity, wealth and equitable education and employment for BIPOC, women, and disabled people, creating cycles of poverty and social marginalization. This has resulted in large disparities in educational opportunity, wealth and asset accumulation, and social mobility. Disparities have been created and widened through government sponsored intentional racism and marginalization in the form of enslavement, forced displacement and loss of homeland of indigenous peoples, Jim Crow era policy, redlining, restrictive zoning ordinances, predatory and barrier-ridden lending practices, the American Credit System, over-policing of communities of color, the lack of protections for disabled people, the lack of rent control in NC, and white power structures' lack of willingness to address, and explicit desire to maintain, racial disparities.

In Orange County, the current Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a 2-bedroom apartment is \$1,631, around 37% higher than the average across North Carolina.¹ Over half of renters in have difficulty affording their homes.² When looking at racial economic disparities across the US and in our area specifically, it is clear that the burden of high housing costs falls disproportionately on communities of color. In 2025, Black residents made up over half of the unhoused population, while representing only 12% of the general population in Orange County.

Adopting the FY26 MOU with OCPEH will support the Partnership in continuing their work to end homelessness in Orange County. This has important race and equity impacts, as the experience of homelessness disproportionately touches BIPOC, low-income households, disabled people, and seniors. Addressing the issues of homelessness and housing insecurity directly supports more equitable outcomes in our community for marginalized populations, across many areas of life. The Housing First Model, which OCPEH and other local homelessness service providers have adopted, asserts that securing housing for those experiencing homelessness should be the priority for service providers. Research indicates that when someone has a safe and dignified home to call theirs, they are much more likely to have success in their

¹ [FY 2024 Fair Market Rent Documentation System — Statewide Summary for North Carolina \(huduser.gov\)](#)

² *The 2024 Housing Need in Orange County*, North Carolina Housing Coalition, January 2024



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goal pursuit in other life areas, like employment, financial well-being, and more.³ This not only has positive personal implications, but allows individuals to more fully participate in the community and economy.

Who is experiencing community burden now? Who will experience community burden if this action is passed? Will others experience community burden if this action is NOT passed?

IF APPROVED – Other than appropriations the Town is already prepared to make based on population data, there would be little burden if the action was approved. Perhaps, some people not facing literal homelessness but still facing housing insecurity could receive less services with this allocation.

WHO IS EXPERIENCING BURDEN/IF NOT APPROVED – The members of the unhoused community who will not receive robust and equitable access to direct housing services, will be further burdened.

As stated above, the unhoused community is currently facing burden.

Who is experiencing community benefit now? Who will experience community benefit if this action is passed? Will others experience community benefit if this action is NOT passed?

IF APPROVED - Unhoused individuals and families will benefit from Town support of OCPEH by accessing critical services and programs focused on locating and subsidizing housing.

OCPEH will benefit from the financial support provided through the MOU. This support funds critical staff positions who carry out the provided services, allowing OCPEH to work towards their mission statement.

Partnering nonprofits will also benefit from the continuation of services provided to the community. The nonprofits and OCPEH often serve the same individuals or families, thus extending their reach and impact. Nonprofits like the Inter-Faith Council and the Community Empowerment Fund collaborate closely with OCPEH to ensure clients are sufficiently supported.

The Towns and County that provide funding to the OCPEH via the MOU benefit by enabling and supporting an organization that assists the Towns and County in addressing the needs of the unhoused population within their jurisdictions. This has the potential to ease the burden on Housing and Community Services, Police, and Fire departments, who most often support the unhoused population in our community.

Taxpayers will experience benefit since it is less expensive to provide services and fill gaps in services than it is to continue homelessness.⁴

³ [Evidence-Behind-Approaches-That-End-Homelessness-Brief-2019.pdf \(usich.gov\)](#)

⁴ [Ending Chronic Homelessness Saves Taxpayers Money - National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)



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IF NOT APPROVED – The Town may experience a financial benefit from not funding OCPEH. This funding could be used for other evidence-based affordable housing initiatives.

CURRENT BENEFIT – Unhoused community members who currently receive services through OCPEH and partner organizations are benefitting, but they would receive greater benefits with additional resources and funding.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

With limited affordable housing stock in our County, it is possible that the impact of funding may also be limited.

OCPEH operates the Continuum of Care in our jurisdiction and administers HOME programs and funding at the County level. This means that they assist in the administration of subsidized programs like Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs). One of the primary requirements for HCV eligibility in Orange County is that the applicant is experiencing active homelessness. With such an emphasis on the unhoused population for support programs, OCPEH may miss those who are currently housed but facing imminent displacement. This may support a cycle of homelessness, getting one unhoused community member into safe housing, while missing those who are on the brink of becoming unhoused and in need of critical housing support.

What steps has your department taken to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences? What strategies might your department take to address these in the future? NOTE: This does not reflect a formal commitment by the Town of Carrboro.

The department continues to engage with jurisdictional peers and community partners to advance affordable housing in the community and to address racial inequities in housing under the guidance of the One Orange Countywide Racial Equity Framework and the Town's Office of Race and Equity. Since this department was formed our work has been increasingly focused on racial disparities in housing, preservation of Black neighborhoods, and increasing housing options for extremely low-income households, who are disproportionately BIPOC. This lens is vitally important in all aspects of the Town's work, and especially in housing where there are blatant disparities along racial lines.